

Therefore, I want to know as to how many such mistakes of mistranslation would occur and how long will it continue?

MR. CHAIRMAN: How many mistakes will occur further and how long will they occur, you can seek the answer to these questions from an astrologer, I cannot reply to these questions.

SHRI LALMUNI CHAUBEY: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister has said ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: Listen, Lalmuni ji, I have said that if any mistake has occurred, however, it has not been established as yet, the same will be got checked from the question branch of the Lok Sabha. The hon. Member will get the information about block level in writing.

DR. RAMKRISHNA KUSHMARIA: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this is a mistake after all ...*(Interruptions)*.

MR. CHAIRMAN: You please take your seat.

[English]

SHRI P.R. DASMUNSI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in view of the fact that the basic minimum facilities to the poorest of the poor of the country and the people in general are given to them by poverty alleviation programmes and rural development programmes through the network of the Panchayati Raj system all over the country and also since the Panchayati Raj system is now well established under the Constitution of India, will the Government consider, as a policy matter, connecting all the panchayats in the country with telephones within the Ninth Five Year Plan period for directly communicating about the entire management of the rural development programmes in a proper manner so that the grassroot masses get the benefits? Will this suggestion about the policy be considered under the Ninth Plan document?

SHRI BALWANT SINGH RAMOOWALIA: Yes, Sir. The Government has already finalised a policy on Village Public Telephones and, according to it the entire villages will be connected by telephones during the Ninth Five Year Plan along with STD facility.

[Translation]

SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, the hon. Minister has said that all sub-divisional headquarters of Bihar have been linked with telephone facility but mere linking will not do. The Government will have to ensure that these telephones work and telephone exchanges function properly. So far as my question is concerned, Sir, there is a telephone exchange at Sekhpura in my area, earlier we used to have direct talk on telephone from Delhi but now that facility does not exist. Therefore, I would like to know whether telephones in sub-division, are working properly and effectively or not? What steps are being taken by the Government to ensure that these telephones work properly and effectively? What action Government are taking to expeditiously rectify those telephone exchanges which are out of order or have developed defects?

MR. CHAIRMAN: Ramendra Kumar ji, we have got its reply. The hon. Minister has said that all efforts would be made to rectify all the telephone exchanges.

SHRI RAMENDRA KUMAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is not a question of efforts. We want to know that the time by when these would be rectified the Government should tell about that.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Next question, Shri Nitish Kumar.

Increase in Freight Rates

*462. SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Will the Minister of RAILWAYS be pleased to state:

(a) whether the attention of the Government has been drawn to the news item captioned "Railways Hike Freight Rates for Essential Items" appearing in the *Business Standard* dated April 8, 1997;

(b) if so, whether the freights of essential consumer items like foodgrains, pulses, edible oil, salt etc. have been increased since April 1, 1997; and

(c) if so, the percentage of hike in the freight of each essential consumer item made and the total additional annual income likely to be earned on account of it?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF STATE IN THE MINISTRY OF RAILWAYS (SHRI SATPAL MAHARAJ): (a) Yes, Sir.

(b) No, Sir.

(c) Does not arise.

[Translation]

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we had asked this question that a news item was appeared in the *Business Standard* dated April 8, 1997 under caption, Railways hike freight rates for essential item; and it was further mentioned therein;

[English]

"Railways have increased freight rates by 12 per cent for essential commodities from April 1, despite Railways Minister Shri Ram Vilas Paswan's categorical assurance in his Railway Budget speech that essential commodities were exempted from the increase in freight rates. This hike is applicable to all essential commodities, grains, pulses, oils, salt, onions, potatoes, sugar, vanaspati, jaguery and fodder.

[Translation]

It was published in the above paper and as per the answer given by the hon. Minister, he has said 'No Sir' in reply to part 'B' of the question. This means that as per his answer this news item is wrongly published I, particularly want to know that after this news item appeared in the *Economic Newspaper*, whether the Government have published any rebuttal or not. If not, the rebuttal should have been published because this news went down all over

the country that something was said in the speech but in reality that is not being done.

MR. CHAIRMAN: Please give the hon. Minister a chance to reply the question.

THE MINISTER OF RAILWAYS (SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN): This news was published on April 7-8 and a rebuttal was published on behalf of the Railway Board through a Press Note on 9th April.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: Mr. Chairman, Sir, I would like to say that in the Budget speech of the hon. Minister it has been mentioned that so and so items would be affected by the freight hike and so and so items would be exempted from the hike. There is a mention in regard to the hike in railway fare, freight rate etc. in the Budget speech and that comes into force with effect from first of April. It is a convention that new rates comes in force from 1st April.

I want to know through you that since these things find a mention in the Budget speech, why the freight rates are increased before the Budget is passed fully and the Demands for Grant are fully passed by this House? We want to know this from the hon. Minister as to why a convention to increase the freight rates after passing the Budget cannot be introduced in place of this convention.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, this issue has been raised many a time in this House. Earlier when the Standing Committee was not there, the General Budget was presented on February 28 generally and 3-4 days prior to that the Railway budget was presented. As a result of which the Budget used to be passed in the month of March. Therefore, no such problem was there that it could not be implemented from April. But since the Standing Committees were constituted and the entire issue is referred to the Standing Committees, then naturally some problems have begun to crop up. So far as the matter to increase the fare from 1st April is concerned, this issue was raised many times in this House and it was first raised in 1974. When this issue was raised in 1974, a ruling was given that it was not a tax. If we want to increase the telephone rates, we can do so. If coal rates are to be increased, we can also do that. In case of Steel also, we increase its rates whenever required. Similarly air fares are also increased from time to time. I do not know about any such instance of railway fare. But when we increase railway fare, we do inform the House. We are doing the same thing.

When this issue was raised in 1974, the Deputy Speaker, said categorically in this very House:

[English]

"I would rather put it the other way. It is the courtesy of the Railway Minister that he comes forward and asks for the opinion of the House even in the matters of increase of fares and freights. I am afraid the Railways fares and freights are fit to be demanded by certain services which the Railways are going to tender to the communities. Therefore, we do not have anything to say about it. They

are only fit that you are demanding for certain services. Therefore, let me say again that it is your courtesy that you come here."

[Translation]

We try to continue that courtesy and give its information to this House.

SHRI NITISH KUMAR: The hon. Minister has said about the Standing Committee just now and he himself admitted that when Standing Committee was not there, there was no such problem. Generally the Budget was passed in March but if it is passed after that, in that case, would you consider that any further date is fixed for enforcement after having passed the Budget, so that the new rates come into effect from that day.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: 1st April is a fixed date and fares and freights are increased from 1st April itself.

[English]

SHRI B.K. GADHVI: Sir, it is good that there is no hike in the freights of foodgrains. But the Railways has resorted to a very diabolical trend. In Punjab, the farmers are not selling their wheat at the price offered by the Government because they find it inadequate. Therefore, they are selling their wheat to the private traders. Now, with a view to compel the farmers to sell their wheat at a distress price, the Railways has completely stopped allocation of wagons to the private traders to transport their wheat from Punjab to other parts of the country. This is very unfair on the part of the Railways. So, would the Railway Minister like to clarify the position? I do not know why other people of the country are deprived of availing wheat from Punjab through Railway transport. It is because when they take their wheat through road, it becomes very costly.

MR. CHAIRMAN: All right, your question is clear.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, it is not related to the main question, but I would send this information to the hon'ble member.

MR. CHAIRMAN: This question is whether you have issued an such directions at the moment availability of wagons would be reduced for exporting wheat from Punjab.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: No such specific directions have been given to any state. We prefer it because it is convenient for Railways to send whole rack from one place to another and it is also profitable. It is difficult to do it partwise.

[English]

SHRI B.K. GADHVI: You have stopped allotting them rakes even.

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: As far as I know no such directions have been issued to any particular state.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: It is a fact that our freight rates are the highest in the world and because of that our freight traffic is gradually switching over from rail transport to road transport?

[Translation]

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, we have a problem that we don't have dedicated line. We have one line and when Railway Station comes, we add 4-5 lines for the convenience of the passengers. ...*(Interruptions)*

MR. CHAIRMAN: This question was that the Traders are sending their goods by road transport instead of Railways because the freight rates of Railways are very high.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: There is no such thing.

[English]

SHRI BASU DEB ACHARIA: Sir, he has not given the reply. I want to know whether it is a fact that our freight rates are the highest in the world. It is a specific question.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: He has said that there is no such thing. Freight rates are not high.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: If the hon'ble member would demand for the comparison of the whole of the country, I would provide figures and if he demands that it should be laid on the table of the house, I would lay it. But there is no such thing that demand has decreased due to the freight rates or we don't have racks for that.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE (CALCUTTA-SOUTH): Mr. Chairman, Sir, the Minister of Railways has not answered that question, he must have that information that the freight rates are highest in our Railways. But he has not told that.

[English]

Shri Basu Deb Acharia is the Chairman of the Standing Committee on Railways. He knows the things. The hon. Minister has evaded the reply. I would like to ask the hon. Minister whether the Ministry of Railways is going to increase the freight rates again. For, the hon. Minister has already said that even after passing the Railway Budget, they can increase the freight rates. He has quoted the ruling given in 1974 by the then Deputy-Speaker on the subject. They go on increasing the prices of petroleum products and the Railway freight. I want the hon. Minister to assure the House that he is not going to increase the freight of essential commodities in the next year.

[Translation]

MR. CHAIRMAN: For how long you want this assurance from him, for next six month or two years.

KUMARI MAMATA BANERJEE: I want an assurance for the period from the year 1997-98.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, Shri Basu Dev Acharya is the chairman, of the Standing Committee. Therefore, I cannot challenge, but I can certainly say that the freight rates are not highest in the world. I can say it with certainty, but I would tell its position later on.

Secondly, Mamata Banerjee had asked the reasons for increasing the rates from April 1st. I have replied to that. I never said it would be hiked repeatedly and so far as the Ministry of Railways is concerned, there is no proposal to increase the fare rates before next Budget.

SHRI BANWARI LAL PUROHIT: Sir, there are lakhs of small traders and small industries in this country. Till now if so happened that one industrialist would produce goods to suffice for one wagon, he would indent for one wagon from Railways, he would receive the wagon and that way be pulled on his business. Now Railways have changed the policy. Now it prefers to give wagons to those who want a rack of atleast fifty wagons. If a trader wants to bring wheat from Punjab to Delhi he can hire a wagon after depositing Rs. 3 lakh and runs his business. But now for hiring one rack, he would require Rs. two crore or two and a half crores. Which means this Government is indirectly helping the big businessman and destroying the small businessman and small industries. It is having a cascading affect on the economy of the country. Hon'ble Minister of Railways, whether it is the policy of your Government to assist the big capitalists and to ignore the poor totally? The policy of assisting the small traders. Change your policy. Would you seriously ponder over this issue.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Mr. Chairman, Sir, there is a proverb that 'cut your coat according to the cloth'. We give top priority to F.C.I. After meeting their demand for full rack. We fulfill the demands of those people who require full rack and then if still wagons are available we give wagons to others also. We are still engaged in fulfilling the demand of F.C.I. I had stated the other difficulties in my budget speech.

SHRI DATTA MAGHE: I would like to ask the Minister that in Vidarbha, Maharashtra or Nanded where subsidy was provided for orange and bananas, you used to provide full rack there. What Banwari Lal ji has just said is true that full rack is not provided. The cultivators keep their produce in the Mandi and subsidy has been discontinued on orange and bananas in that area. The big traders sent the produce of the cultivators to Delhi.

[English]

MR. CHAIRMAN: This is not pertaining to the question.

The question is regarding increase of freight on essential commodities.

[Translation]

MR. DATTA MEGHE (RAMTEK): I would like to ask that the subsidy which was provided by the Railways for orange and Bananas in Maharashtra earlier would be continued or it has been discontinued? You have discontinued it, therefore I want to ask.

MR. CHAIRMAN: If you have answer, please reply.

SHRI RAM VILAS PASWAN: Exemption has been continued on the essential commodities and I have read out the list of essential commodities in the Budget speech.

Losses by IA and AI

464. SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI:

SHRI ILIYAS AZMI:

Will the Minister of CIVIL AVIATION be pleased to state:

(a) the loss suffered by Indian Airlines and Air India during each of the last three years and the current years, so far;

(b) the reasons therefor and the routes on which loss is being incurred;

(c) whether these airlines are indulging in wasteful expenditure and aircraft operations are not taking place properly; and

(d) if so, the efforts being made by the Government to check such tendency?

[English]

THE MINISTER OF CIVIL AVIATION (SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM): (a) to (d) A Statement is laid on the Table of the House.

Statement

(a) Year	Net Profit/(Loss)	
	Air India	Indian Airlines
		(Rs. in crores)
1993-94	201.90	(258.46)
1994-95	40.80	(188.73)
1995-96	(271.84)	(109.98)
1996-97	(280.00)	(24.00)
	(estimated)	(estimated)

(b) Air India incurred losses due to increase in expenditure on account of interest and depreciation on new

aircraft, reduction in yield due to increased competition and cost of operations, increased landing, handling and navigational charges, agitation by engineers, depreciation of rupee value, etc. Air India has been incurring loss on its operations to the European Continent, Canada, UK, USA, Israel, East Africa, Hong Kong, Japan and freighter operations to USA and Singapore.

Indian Airlines has been incurring losses due to grounding of A320 fleet, entry of private airlines on trunk routes, exodus of pilots, unfavourable exchange fluctuations, increase in operational costs etc. Indian Airlines has been incurring losses on routes connecting stations in North Eastern India, Jammu and Kashmir, Andaman & Nicobar Islands and some stations in the South.

(c) No, Sir; and

(d) Does not arise.

[Translation]

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI: Mr. Chairman, Sir, in the written reply, it has been stated that Air India had incurred a loss of about Rs. 201.9 crore in the year 1993-94 and Rs. 40.8 crore in the year 1994-95. Then again in the year 1995-96 it rose to more than 271 crores and it was Rs. 280 crores in the year 1986-87, so this jump from Rs. 201 crores to 40 crores and then again it rose to Rs. 270 crores ... (Interruptions)

MR. CHAIRMAN: Mr. Fatami, ask pointed question.

SHRI MOHAMMAD ALI ASHRAF FATMI: I am asking pointed question. I want to ask whether the reasons given in the reply are the very reasons for loss, whether it is not a fact that the staff capacity is more in Air India and Indian Airlines? Similarly, we do not have that type of aircrafts which we should have, such as we should have medium capacity long range aircraft. Similarly Indian Airlines should have 50 seater small plane, which Indian Airlines should have, they are also not there, similarly there is lack of facilities in long route flights of Air India. Besides our planes have been operating on such routes which are loss incurring routes. Whether the Minister would like to reply to it?

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: Hon'ble Member has raised a question, although it is a long question.

MR. CHAIRMAN: In the question shortcoming has been pointed out in your equipment.

[English]

Are you making any provision for getting the right type of aircraft?

[Translation]

SHRI C.M. IBRAHIM: So far Air India is concerned, you see, the estimate of Rs. 280 crore is last. Indian Airlines had incurred a loss of Rs. 258 crores, in the year 1994-95 it incurred a loss of Rs. 188 crores and in the year 1995-96 it incurred a loss of Rs. 109 crores and in